THE SECOND BOOK

AS I am about to begin to teach how our first letter, A, is to be made from the I, I would beg the good student to learn, first of all, what the Point is; and what the Line is, whether straight or not straight, whether it is what is called curved, or angular; and what the Circle is, what the Square, what the Triangle; and consequently to learn the most common figures of Geometry. For these Attic letters of ours are all made and designed from them, as I shall show, with our Lord's assistance. And to the end that you may have no excuse for ignorance, I will set down here their definitions, one after the other, and will describe them in the terms used by Euclid long ago.

PUnctus, he says, *est cuius pars non est.* That is to say, the point is a mark that cannot be divided. And, as Messire Charles Bouille says in his Geometry, in French, 'The point is called neither quantity nor measure, but it is the end of every quantity; it has neither length, nor breadth, nor thickness.'[24]

LInea, says Euclid, *est longitudo sine latitudine, cuius quidem extremitates sunt duo puncta.* The line is length without breadth, of which the ends are two points. As Bouille says: 'The line is the first and smallest quantity of all, having length only, without breadth or thickness; as A————B.' Aulus Gellius, in chapter XX of his first book,* says to the like purpose: *Linea autem a nostris dicitur, quam* ΓΡΑΜΜΗΝ *Græci vocant. Eam M. Varro ita definit: Linea est, inquit, longitudo quædam sine latitudine et altitudine.* Ευκλειδησ *autem breuius, præter missa altitudine.* ΓΡΑΜΜΗ *est, inquit,* μηκοσ απλατεσ. *Id est longitudo illatabilis, quod, exprimere uno latine uerbo non queas, nisi audeas dicere Illatabilis.*† That is to say: What the Latins call *linea,* the Greeks call γραμμην. Marcus Varro describes and defines it thus: 'The line,' he says, 'is a sort of length without breadth or height.' Euclid describes it more briefly, omitting the height, when he says: γραμμη εστι μηκοσ απλατεσ; that is to say: the line is length without breadth (*illatable*), which cannot be widened; the which cannot be expressed plainly in Latin, unless you make bold to say, *illatabilis.*

* *Noctes Atticæ*, I, 20, 9.

† *Gellius manufactured this word (from 'in' and 'latus'), to translate Euclid's* ἀπλατῆς. *Tory's translation is sufficiently close.*